



**US Army Corps
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New York District

NEWS RELEASE

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U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to examine sediment conditions of the Gowanus Bay and Canal

New York (April 28, 2003) – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers New York District today announced the deployment of an in-house team of experts from the Corps' Baltimore District to begin a geo-technical investigation of the sediment conditions throughout the Gowanus Canal in Gowanus, Brooklyn. The sediment sampling is part of the five million dollar feasibility study currently underway to assess the environmental problems and potential solutions to restore the ecological health of the Gowanus Canal and Bay.

"The Corps of Engineers, in particular the New York District, has committed to several environmental restoration projects, with the study of the Gowanus Canal being one of them," said Col. John O'Dowd, New York District Engineer. "What is unique about our agency is that we can leverage our breadth and depth of experience, such as the case for this round of sampling, using geologists and drillers from our sister District that have more than 20 years of experience sampling similar inner tidal areas."

The goal of the two to four week project is to sample 30 locations within the Gowanus Canal and conduct an initial evaluation of the sediments to assess their contamination potential, and if necessary, determine proper disposal procedures. Using a specialized barge constructed to work in shallow waters such as the Gowanus Canal, an expert team of geologists and drillers will deploy the split-spoon sampling method standardized by the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) to conduct the geo-technical investigation in conjunction with samples being tested for any residual chemical contamination.

The Gowanus Canal was once an active waterway with former industrial users and commercial shippers, and as a result, may have subsurface areas with potentially contaminated materials. It was constructed by the City of New York in 1881 for commercial use, and years of rapid growth, inadequate systems for sewage disposal and unlimited discharges of raw sewage directly into its waters, turned it into a polluted ecosystem.

"The Gowanus Canal is an integral part of the Brooklyn community, with several local grassroots organizations engaged in this revitalization effort," said Thomas Shea, project manager, Army Corps. "The results of the soil samples will help us determine how to best move forward with the detailed study and ultimately with the overall restoration of the Canal and Bay."

The study, which is cost-shared with the New York City Department of Environmental Protection, will identify many strategies to address current issues such as contaminated sediment, poor water quality, biological productivity, habitat creation and overall waterfront revitalization goals. The Final Restoration Feasibility Report, which will contain extensive environmental documentation and restoration recommendations, is scheduled for completion by January 2005.